

11 INTRODUCTION TO RESPONSES TO COMMENTS VOLUMES

This introduction explains the organization of and how to use Volume 2 of the Revised Final Program EIR, which includes the responses to public comments on the March 2010 Revised Draft Program EIR Material.

11.1 STANDARD RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY RAISED COMMENTS

As part of the public review process for March 2010 Revised Draft Program EIR Material, the Authority received more than 500 written comment letters and verbal comments at public hearings containing more than 3,750 individual comments. These comments addressed the March 2010 Revised Draft Program EIR Material, the prior May 2008 Final Program EIR, the proposed decision on a network alternative for connecting the HST system between the Bay Area and the Central Valley, and numerous other policy issues related to the HST system statewide and in the Bay Area. The first section of this Response to Comments volume provides narrative standard responses to address the most frequently raised issues in the written and verbal comments received. The Standard Responses briefly summarize a topic raised frequently in the comment letters and then provide a response that directly addresses the comments, or that supplements the response to an individual comment. The reader can obtain an overview of the most frequently raised comments by reviewing Chapter 12 of the responses to comments volumes.

- Standard Response 1—Purpose and Scope of the Revised Draft Program EIR Material
- Standard Response 2—Tiered Planning Process for HST System and Relationship of Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR Process to Project-Level EIR/EISs
- Standard Response 3—Level of Detail for Impacts Analysis and Mitigation
- Standard Response 4—Ridership Modeling & Business Plan
- Standard Response 5—Project Noise Issues
- Standard Response 6—The Effect of the HST Network Alternatives on Individual Property Values, On Neighborhood and Community Quality of Life, and on Individual Quality of Life
- Standard Response 7—Eminent Domain
- Standard Response 8—Business Plan
- Standard Response 9—UPRR
- Standard Response 10—Alternatives

11.2 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO WRITTEN AND VERBAL COMMENTS

Following the standard responses, the Authority is providing responses to individual written and verbal comments. The individual letters and comments included and addressed in these volumes are organized and numbered with acronyms as follows:

- State Agencies – S (Chapter 13)
- Local Agencies – L (Chapter 14)
- Organizations – O (Chapter 15)
- Individuals – I (Chapter 16)
- Public Hearings – PH (Chapter 17)

Each written submission and oral presentation can be found under the appropriate category, by name, or if representing an organization, the name of their organization. If a commenter gave oral or written testimony at one of the public hearings, they will find their comments, submissions, and responses under "Public Hearings." Each written comment letter sent to the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) was assigned an alphanumeric identifier. For example the California Public Utilities Commission letter is found in Chapter 13, "State Agencies," and its comment letter has been designated as S001. Each comment letter and the public hearing transcript have brackets in the right-hand margin with identification numbers for each comment. Some letters or oral statements have been treated as a single comment, whereas in others multiple comments have been identified, numbered and responded to individually. The responses to comment(s) are located at the end of each letter or transcript. Each response is labeled with the letter/testimony identifier and comment number (such as S001-1) that relates back to that particular bracketed comment.

Some comments from the same agency, organization, or individual were submitted more than once (e.g., letter was first faxed and then mailed). These duplicate comment letters are not included.

11.3 RESPONSES TO WRITTEN AND VERBAL COMMENTS ON THE MAY 2008 BAY AREA TO CENTRAL VALLEY HST FINAL PROGRAM EIR/EIS

The Authority recirculated portions of its May 2008 Final Program EIR to comply with the court ruling in the *Town of Atherton* case and requested that members of the public limit their comments to the revised and recirculated materials. (CEQA Guidelines, § 150885(f)(2).) The CEQA Guidelines indicate that a lead agency need only respond to those comments received during the recirculation period that relate to the portions of the EIR that were revised and recirculated. The Authority received a very large number of comments directed to portions of the Program EIR that had not been revised and recirculated. In some instances, identical or nearly identical comments were addressed previously in Volume 3 of the May 2008 Final Program EIR, which responded to 1300 individual comments contained in more than 400 comment letters received on the July 2007 Draft Program EIR. In other instances, the comments received during the March/April 2010 public comment period are different than those received during the original comment period in the summer of 2007. In these current responses to comments volume, the Authority has provided a response to all significant environmental issues raised in comments on the Revised Draft Program EIR Material, as well as comments on the 2008 Final Program EIR and on the project generally. The responses address comments that go well beyond the Revised Draft Program EIR in the interest of increasing public information about the proposed HST system and increasing communication with those submitting comments and potentially affected communities along the proposed alignments for the HST system.

A. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN REVIEWING THE RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

The reader should keep in mind several considerations in reviewing the responses to comments. Although the Authority's certification and decisions related to the 2008 Final Program EIR have been rescinded, many responses refer to the 2008 Final EIR to provide information, for example, information as to mitigation commitments made in 2008 by the Authority. This is often the case since so many comments pertained to the May 2008 Final Program EIR, rather than to the Revised Draft Program EIR. These references to the prior Final Program EIR should not be construed as indicating a prejudgment of the outcome of this process. Certainly, consideration of mitigation commitments will depend upon the HST network alternative that may be ultimately selected by the Authority for further study. However the 2008 decision documents provide information concerning the types and extent of mitigation that it is expected the Authority would likely consider when it is asked to consider whether to certify the Revised Final Program EIR and whether to adopt CEQA findings and other decision documents. In addition, some responses refer to study and analysis activities to be undertaken in project-level review of environmental impacts related to the HST system. Such references are not to be construed as prejudging the outcome of this environmental

process. Further project-level studies will depend on the outcome of this process and will reflect any new decisions the Authority makes concerning the Final Program EIR for the Bay Area to Central Valley portion of the HST system.